

CIA chief: North Korea 'on cusp' of nuclear capability



Image: Reuters

North Korea has ramped up its missile testing in recent months.

CIA director Mike Pompeo has warned that North Korea is on the cusp of being able to hit the US with a nuclear missile.

He stressed Washington still preferred diplomacy and sanctions but said military force remained an option.

North Korea claims it already has the capability to strike the US.

Mr Pompeo also said that a US-Canadian hostage couple freed last week had in fact been held in Pakistan, rather than Afghanistan as initially assumed.

He said Canadian Joshua Boyle and his US wife Caitlan Coleman had been “held for five years inside of Pakistan”.

This contradicted accounts from Pakistani officials, who said the family had been held in Afghanistan, and moved across the border into the Kurram tribal district

of Pakistan on 11 October.

Pyongyang's 'final step'

North Korea is "close enough now in their capabilities that from a US policy perspective we ought to behave as if we are on the cusp of them achieving that objective," Mr Pompeo said at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a conservative Washington think tank, on Thursday.

"They are so far along in that, it's now a matter of thinking about how do you stop the final step."



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Mr Pompeo said military force had to remain an option.

He warned Pyongyang's missile expertise was now advancing so quickly that it was hard for US intelligence to be sure when it would succeed.

"When you're now talking about months our capacity to understand that at a detailed level is in some sense irrelevant," he said.

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Last weekend, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had also insisted President

Donald Trump wanted to resolve the confrontation with North Korea through diplomacy.

His statement had come after Mr Trump had publicly told him not to waste time seeking talks with Kim Jong-un.

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